

Books24x7

When Speed is of the Essence

How Books24x7 Referenceware gave Reuters an estimated ROI of over 3 x the company's initial investment within 12 months – replacing some of their instructor-led training with an alternative that the company's employees found more responsive to their learning needs and more relevant to their job roles.

“I’m a software developer so reference material is critical. Books24x7 provides all I could possibly need – with the unique and incredibly valuable ability to search across all of it instead of one book at a time.”

“It’s a great way to gain a consensus view across several authors on a specific technical issue – especially if you want objective information rather than vendor hype.”

When you work for a global news and information giant such as Reuters – providing a speedy and accurate service is paramount. But packaging and transmitting financial data and news to the financial industry, the media, web sites and wireless services on six continents is no mean feat! And ensuring the technology that supports these services runs smoothly is an ongoing challenge.

Reuters customers – including banks around the world, news organisations and major global corporations - want the very latest news and information as it actually happens. To achieve this Reuters has to have the fastest, most advanced and sophisticated products possible. And the company's IT professionals need to be equally quick, adept and talented in developing new products and assisting customers in maximising them.

Historically, to keep up to date with new developments, technical staff purchased programming books, attended classroom courses, and surfed the Internet to source the technical information and develop the programming skills they needed to create the latest software for Reuters products – as well as to find solutions to customer queries and problems. However, this can be time consuming and costly – particularly considering the number of technical and IT development employees working in Reuters development centres in London, Bangkok, Paris and St. Louis.

“Many of the books that I look at would normally cost in the region of £30 – £50. Therefore, this not only saves me and the company money, but also allows me to look at books that I wouldn’t normally buy but find interesting and useful. Hard copy technical books often go out of date very quickly. This is not a problem with Books24x7.”

Reuters thought that there was a more efficient way to keep its technical employees up-to-date than sending them out on classroom courses for all their learning needs. Marcel Fokkema, a Training Manager at Reuters felt that Books24x7 could fill an important gap. He believed that Books24x7 would provide Reuters product developers with access to valuable information more effectively; and that it would make the company’s community of technical engineers more knowledgeable, enabling them to provide a faster, more effective response to technical queries from customers.

Trialing an alternative to instructor-led training

To satisfy itself that Books24x7 would add value to the company, Reuters ran a pilot programme and assessed the benefits for some of its software developers and its technical engineers. The pilot was a resounding success and the feedback was even better than anticipated. Developers said that Books24x7 enabled them to find support very quickly and, more importantly, at the point when they actually needed it. Both groups said that it had significantly reduced the number of reference books they had to purchase and that it helped them to identify which books were actually worth buying in hard copy format and which weren’t.

“For us, Books24x7 provides a new way of equipping our technical staff with the knowledge and skills they need to be effective in their jobs. Instead of sending people on instructor-led courses where, with no follow-up and reinforcement, all the research tells us that they will retain about 5% of what they learned, we wanted to move to a model where we could give people access to the knowledge they need - as and when they need it. Books24x7 fits this model perfectly.”

Charles Jennings, Head of Global Learning, Reuters

The programme received senior level sponsorship from Charles Jennings, Head of Global Learning and, Mike Sayers, Global Head of Operations & Technology.

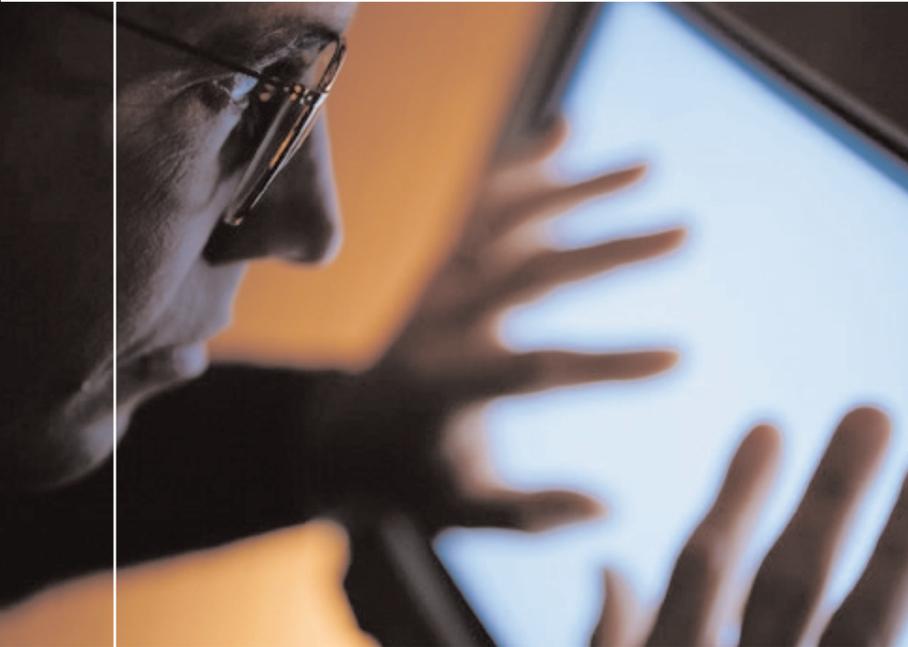
Reuters adopted a soft approach to the roll out of Books24x7, starting out with 1,250 licences for IT Pro and informing employees about the new service via Reuters internal ‘Daily Briefing’ – a selection of daily news items posted on the company’s intranet. Reuters internal network of trainers also spread the word and line managers were informed about the potential benefits Books24x7 could bring to their teams.

There was no specific licence allocation. To apply, any employee simply logged onto an internal Books24x7 website and registered. As word of mouth spread about the usefulness of Books24x7, more and more employees registered to use this resource; Marcel Fokkema explains one of the reasons why:

“Line manager and colleague recommendation has been a key part of this programme. As soon as someone has used Books24x7 and appreciated how quickly it can deliver the information they need, the word spread amongst other members of their team.”

Results

The initial Books24x7 licence allocation was taken up within 6 months but the demand hadn’t entirely been fulfilled – necessitating the purchase of further licences. Now, Books24x7 has become an integral part of the training programme at Reuters, and an increasingly important part of the way in which they train their technical staff. In the future Marcel Fokkema expects that Reuters technical staff will use Books24x7 to gain a certain amount of knowledge prior to attending a classroom-based courses, or replace some classroom-based courses altogether. And he anticipates that their technical trainers will be referencing specific books that they will want staff to read to enhance their learning once an instructor-led course is completed.



“It’s a great way to gain a consensus view across several authors on a specific technical issue – especially if you want objective information rather than vendor hype.”

The results of an internal survey show that:

- 97% believe that Books24x7 is useful
- 90.7% would recommend it to others
- 95.7% say that the content is relevant to their role
- 95.1% say that it enables them to find speedy answers to job-related questions
- 90.8% believe that Books24x7 will expand skills and increase personal development
- 85.9% say that it makes them more productive
- 62.2% of users believe that using Books 24x7 is saving them time - on average this group say that the time saving equates to 4.9 hours per month, with almost half believing it saves them between 6 and 10 hours per month
- 41.1% say that Books24x7 has reduced the need for classroom courses – citing approximately 2 instructor-led courses per annum which are no longer required
- Almost 95% of users are active – in the first 6 month they had accessed 2,304 unique titles and clocked up nearly 16,000 sessions over 330,000 active minutes.

"With Books24x7 we are giving resources back to the employees and getting them used to the fact that there are other more effective ways of training than classroom alone."

Marcel Fokkema, Business Training Manager, Global Learning, Reuters

WHAT REUTERS EMPLOYEES SAY

General Comments:

“This service provides the answers to queries which might be raised when doing my job and acts as a quick and easily accessible reference without having to attend courses or be at the bookstore physically.”

“It’s an excellent reference when I’m researching a new technology. The word or phrase search is invaluable in being able to find discussions on any particular technology.”

“It has helped to find specific information that was not easily located in standard resources/Internet searches.”

Job Specific:

“One time I had to create an account on the UNIX machine and had forgotten how, so I went into Books24x7 and searched for the UNIX admin books and found the way to do it.”

“When writing an overview of software testing for Reuters I was able to consult most of the standard works on the subject very easily and quickly. The search facilities are extremely useful.”

“The search feature works great! I’ve found quick answers to .NET programming topics.

“Using this service I have found information on routers, switches TCPI/IP, Net-LAN, Net-Wan and Cisco – very, very important.”

“Descriptions and practical use examples of APIs, products and platforms. If I search for a specific problem I know, but I don’t know the exact command, then Books24x7 helps me most.”

Professional Development:

“It helped me to get Sun Solaris 8 Admin Certified (2 Exams) in only 2 months.”

“I recently changed roles and it has been very useful in bringing me up to speed with the technology used in the new job.”

“As information technology is growing very fast I need to update my knowledge. I think Books24x7 is very useful as a source of learning due to the difficulty in getting good technical books in my country.”

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